



25 February, 2004

FIGHT AGAINST DEPRESSION

Within communities there is a “hidden depression” amongst the young and the elderly that frequently goes unrecognised.

This is one of the special issues to be addressed at a Public Forum in Port Macquarie next month (March) aimed at extending rural education in the fight against depression and mood disorders. It will be officially opened by the Mayor of Hastings Shire Council, Councillor Rob Drew.

The forum is being organised by Black Dog Institute, a NSW Government funded organisation undertaking research, treatment, education and diagnosis of mood disorders. The Institute is holding the Public Forum in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Port Macquarie and with the support of the Mid-North Coast Area Health Service.

In addition to the Public Forum, The Black Dog Institute is, in conjunction with the Hastings Division of General Practice, organising an education day in separate programs for General Practitioners, Psychologists and Community Mental Health Workers.

Associate Professor James Greenwood, convenor of telepsychiatry and rural and remote clinics at the Black Dog Institute, heads the list of speakers at the Public Forum. Another from the Institute is Sue Grdovic, Senior Project Officer of the Consumer & Community Resource Centre.

They will be joined by Area Health staff as well as a consumer speaker to be revealed soon.

Speaking from Sydney today, Professor Greenwood said depression was a growing problem for the community and already was the largest cause of medical disability in Australia.

The World Health Organisation forecast it will become the second largest burden of disease in the world by the year 2020.

“Whilst it is currently seen as mainly an illness that affects the middle aged, it may surprise people to know that the highest group impacted are young females,” according to Professor Greenwood.

There is also, he said, a “hidden” group of sufferers- the younger and the older people - that often go unrecognised in the community.

“Young people are often seen as just being difficult adolescents, whilst older folk are sometimes seen as being lonely or showing signs of early dementia – when in fact, they suffer from depression,” Professor Greenwood said.

Professor Greenwood suggests that when the problem is recognised many people may be treated effectively and gain relief from the disorder, returning to active and productive lives.

Because there are different types of depression it must be diagnosed properly in the first instance. Treatments specific to the type of depression will give the best outcome.

Professor Greenwood said the old view that all depression is the same leads to a confusing mixture of treatments with variable outcomes.

“Better results occur when the initial diagnosis separates the types of depression and directs the correct treatment of the type,” he said.

The Public Forum is free and is being held on Saturday 13 March in the Rushcutter Room at Panthers Port Macquarie Club, 1 Bay Street, Port Macquarie. It will commence at 11am and will allow time for questions and comments from local residents. There will be coffee/tea afterwards when individuals will be able to meet speakers and discuss the issues.

FOOTNOTE:

The Black Dog Institute obtained its name from the description given by Winston Churchill to his own depression.

For further information or if you wish to arrange newspaper/television or radio interviews with Professor Greenwood please contact Ian Dose at the Black Dog Institute on: Mobile 0419 618 606 or email: ian.dosepr@optusnet.com.au ENDS